

TOWN OF COLUMBUS
PUBLIC RECORDS POLICY AND FEE SCHEDULE

ADOPTED: JUNE 8, 2026

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide public access to Town records in accordance with Wisconsin Public Records Law, Wis. Stat. §§ 19.31-19.39. It is the policy of the Town that all persons are entitled to the greatest possible information regarding the affairs of government and the official acts of public officers and employees consistent with Wisconsin law.

II. LEGAL CUSTODIAN

The Town Clerk shall serve as the legal custodian of Town records unless otherwise designated by law, ordinance, resolution, or this policy.

The legal custodian shall:

- Receive and process public records requests.
- Respond to requests as soon as practicable and without delay.
- Maintain records in accordance with applicable retention schedules.
- Consult with legal counsel when necessary, regarding disclosure requirements.

III. HOURS AND LOCATION FOR RECORD INSPECTION

Public records shall be available for inspection by appointment at the Town Hall or other designated location.

Inspection of records is free of charge unless otherwise provided by law.

IV. REQUESTING RECORDS

- A. Requests may be made orally or in writing.
- B. Requests should reasonably describe the records sought.
- C. A requester is not required to identify themselves or state the purpose of the request except as authorized by law.
- D. Requests shall be processed as soon as practicable and without delay.
- E. Records will be provided electronically whenever practical and when the records already exist in electronic format.

V. DENIAL OF REQUESTS

If a request is denied in whole or in part, the legal custodian shall provide a written statement of the reasons for denial when required by Wisconsin law.

VI. FEES

The Town may charge only the actual, necessary, and direct costs authorized by Wis. Stat. § 19.35(3).

A. Inspection

Inspection of records: No charge.

B. Copies

Black-and-white copies: \$0.15 per page.

Color copies: Actual reproduction cost, not to exceed \$0.25 per page unless higher actual costs are documented.

Oversized documents, maps, plans, photographs, audio recordings, video recordings, or other specialized reproductions: Actual, necessary, and direct reproduction cost.

C. Electronic Records

Records transmitted by email: No charge when records already exist electronically and can be readily transmitted.

Electronic media (USB drive, CD, DVD, or similar media): Actual cost of media.

If a record is not maintained in a readily comprehensible format and special processing is required, the Town may charge the actual cost of creating a readily comprehensible copy as authorized by law.

D. Location Costs

Location fees shall be charged only when the actual cost of locating responsive records equals or exceeds \$50.00.

Location costs shall be based upon the hourly wage and fringe benefits of the lowest-paid employee capable of performing the search.

The location rate shall not exceed \$30.00 per hour unless specialized expertise is required and documented.

"Locating" records means searching for, examining, and identifying responsive records.

E. Mailing and Shipping

Actual postage, shipping, and packaging costs.

F. Charges Not Permitted

The Town shall not charge for:

- Reviewing records for disclosure.
- Determining whether records are subject to release.
- Redacting confidential information.
- Time spent consulting with legal counsel regarding disclosure.

G. Prepayment

If estimated fees exceed \$5.00, the Town may require prepayment before processing the request.

H. Fee Waiver

The legal custodian may recommend, and the Town Board may approve, a waiver or reduction of fees when doing so serves the public interest.

VII. ELECTRONIC RECORDS PREFERENCE

Whenever practical, records shall be provided electronically to minimize costs for both the requester and the Town.

VIII. RECORD RETENTION

Records shall be maintained and disposed of in accordance with Wisconsin records retention requirements and approved retention schedules.

IX. SEVERABILITY

If any portion of this policy is determined to be invalid, the remainder shall remain in effect.

X. EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy shall become effective immediately upon adoption by the Town Board.

TOWN BOARD, TOWN OF COLUMBUS

Don Gorske Town Chairperson

Edward H. Wolf Town Supervisor

Harold Schover Town Supervisor

Attest: Marilee Dwyer Town Clerk